

Recreation Workers

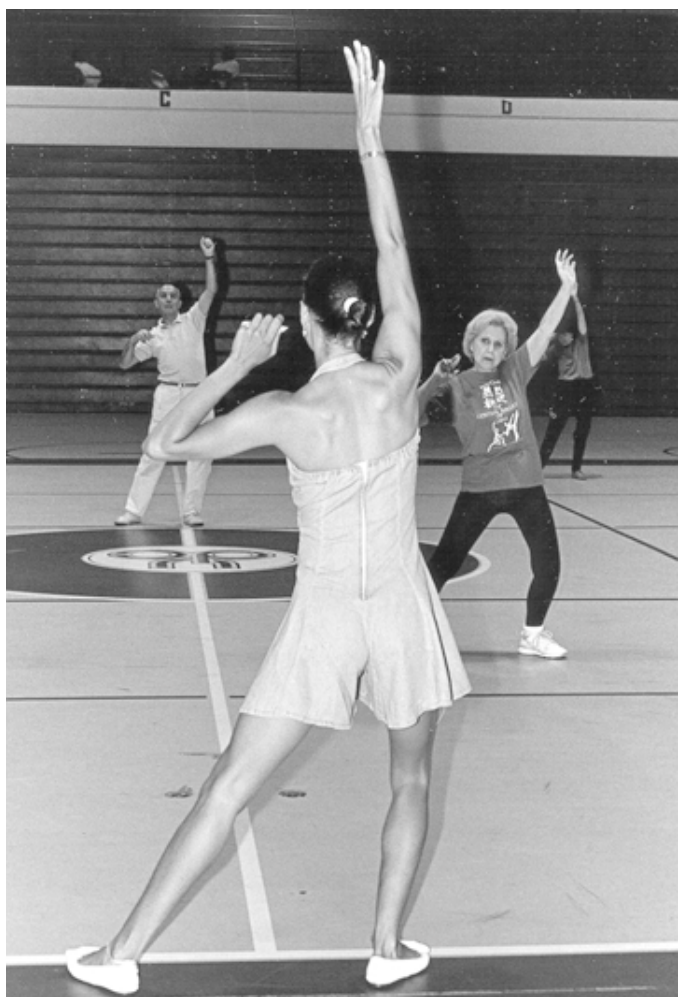
(O*NET 27311)

Significant Points

- The recreation field has an unusually large number of part-time, seasonal, and volunteer jobs.
- Educational requirements range from a high school diploma to a graduate degree.
- Competition will remain keen for full-time career positions; persons with formal training and experience gained in part-time or seasonal recreation jobs should have the best opportunities.

Nature of the Work

People spend much of their leisure time participating in a wide variety of organized recreational activities, such as aerobics, arts and crafts, little league baseball, tennis, camping, and softball. Recreation workers plan, organize, and direct these activities in local playgrounds and recreation areas, parks, community centers, health clubs, religious organizations, camps, theme parks, and most tourist attractions. Increasingly, recreational workers are also found in workplaces, where they organize and direct leisure activities and athletic programs for employees of all ages.



Recreation workers plan, organize, and direct various athletic and leisure activities.

These workers hold a variety of positions at different levels of responsibility. *Recreation leaders*, who are responsible for a recreation program's daily operation, primarily organize and direct participants. They may lead and give instruction in dance, drama, crafts, games, and sports; schedule use of facilities and keep records of equipment use; and ensure recreation facilities and equipment are used properly. Workers who provide instruction and coach teams in specialties such as art, music, drama, swimming, or tennis may be called *activity specialists*.

Recreation supervisors oversee recreation leaders and also plan, organize, and manage recreational activities to meet the needs of a variety of populations. These workers often serve as liaisons between the director of the park or recreation center and the recreation leaders. Recreation supervisors with more specialized responsibilities may also direct special activities or events and oversee a major activity, such as aquatics, gymnastics, or performing arts.

Directors of recreation and parks develop and manage comprehensive recreation programs in parks, playgrounds, and other settings. Directors usually serve as technical advisors to State and local recreation and park commissions and may be responsible for recreation and park budgets.

Camp counselors lead and instruct children and teenagers in outdoor-oriented forms of recreation, such as swimming, hiking, horseback riding, and camping. In addition, counselors provide campers with specialized instruction in activities such as archery, boating, music, drama, gymnastics, tennis, and computers. In resident camps, counselors also provide guidance and supervise daily living and general socialization. (Workers in a related occupation, *recreational therapists*, help individuals recover or adjust to illness, disability, or specific social problems; this occupation is described elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

Working Conditions

The work setting for recreation workers may vary from a cruise ship, to a woodland recreational park, to a playground in the center of a large urban community. Regardless of setting, most recreation workers spend much of their time outdoors and may work in a variety of weather conditions. Recreation directors and supervisors, however, typically spend most of their time in an office, planning programs and special events. Because full-time recreation workers spend more time acting as managers than as hands-on activities leaders, they engage in less physical activity. Nevertheless, recreation workers at all levels risk suffering an injury during physical activities.

Most recreation workers put in about 40 hours a week. People entering this field, especially camp counselors, should expect some night and weekend work and irregular hours. About 3 out of 10 work part time, and many jobs are seasonal.

Employment

Recreation workers held about 241,000 jobs in 1998, and many additional workers held summer jobs in this occupation. Of those with year-round jobs as recreation workers, about half worked in park and recreation departments of municipal and county governments. Nearly 1 in 4 worked in membership organizations, such as the Boy or Girl Scouts, the YMCA, and Red Cross, or worked for programs run by social service organizations, including senior centers, adult daycare programs, or residential care facilities like halfway houses, group homes, and institutions for delinquent youth. Another 1 out of 10 worked for nursing and other personal care facilities.

Other employers of recreation workers included commercial recreation establishments, amusement parks, sports and entertainment centers, wilderness and survival enterprises, tourist attractions, vacation excursion companies, hotels and resorts, summer camps, health and athletic clubs, and apartment complexes.

The recreation field has an unusually large number of part-time, seasonal, and volunteer jobs. These jobs include summer

camp counselors, lifeguards, craft specialists, and after-school and weekend recreation program leaders. In addition, many teachers and college students accept jobs as recreation workers when school is not in session. The vast majority of volunteers serve as activity leaders at local day-camp programs, or in youth organizations, camps, nursing homes, hospitals, senior centers, YMCAs, and other settings. Some volunteers serve on local park and recreation boards and commissions. Volunteer experience, part-time work during school, or a summer job can lead to a full-time career as a recreation worker.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Educational requirements for recreation workers range from a high school diploma, or sometimes less for many summer jobs, to graduate degrees for some administrative positions in large public recreation systems. Full-time career professional positions usually require a college degree with a major in parks and recreation or leisure studies, but a bachelor’s degree in any liberal arts field may be sufficient for some jobs in the private sector. In industrial recreation, or “employee services” as it is more commonly called, companies prefer to hire those with a bachelor’s degree in recreation or leisure studies and a background in business administration.

Specialized training or experience in a particular field, such as art, music, drama, or athletics, is an asset for many jobs. Some jobs also require certification. For example, when teaching or coaching water-related activities, a lifesaving certificate is a prerequisite. Graduates of associate degree programs in parks and recreation, social work, and other human services disciplines also enter some career recreation positions. High school graduates occasionally enter career positions, but this is not common. Some college students work part time as recreation workers while earning degrees.

A bachelor’s degree and experience are preferred for most recreation supervisor jobs and required for most higher-level administrator jobs. However, increasing numbers of recreation workers who aspire to administrator positions obtain master’s degrees in parks and recreation or related disciplines. Also, many persons in other disciplines, including social work, forestry, and resource management, pursue graduate degrees in recreation.

Programs leading to an associate or bachelor’s degree in parks and recreation, leisure studies, or related fields are offered at several hundred colleges and universities. Many also offer master’s or doctoral degrees in this field. In 1997, 93 bachelor’s degree programs in parks and recreation were accredited by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). Accredited programs provide broad exposure to the history, theory, and practice of park and recreation management. Courses offered include community organization, supervision and administration, recreational needs of special populations, such as older adults or the disabled, and supervised fieldwork. Students may specialize in areas such as therapeutic recreation, park management, outdoor recreation, industrial or commercial recreation, and camp management.

The American Camping Association offers workshops and courses for experienced camp directors at different times and locations throughout the year. Some national youth associations offer training courses for camp directors at the local and regional levels.

Persons planning recreation careers should be outgoing, good at motivating people, and sensitive to the needs of others. Good health and physical fitness are typically required, while activity planning calls for creativity and resourcefulness. Individuals contemplating careers in recreation at the supervisory or administrative level should develop managerial skills. College courses in management, business administration, accounting, and personnel management are likely to be useful.

Certification in the recreation field is offered by the NRPA National Certification Board. The NRPA, along with its State chapters, offers certification as a Certified Leisure Professional (CLP) for those with a college degree in recreation, and as a Certified

Leisure Technician (CLT) for those with less than 4 years of college. Other NRPA certifications include Certified Leisure Provisional Professional (CLPP), Certified Playground Inspector (CPI), and Aquatic Facility Operations (AFO) Certification. Continuing education is necessary to remain certified.

Job Outlook

Competition will remain keen for career positions in recreation, as the number of jobseekers for full-time positions is expected to exceed the number of job openings. Opportunities for staff positions should be best for persons with formal training and experience gained in part-time or seasonal recreation jobs. Those with graduate degrees should have the best opportunities for supervisory or administrative positions.

Prospects are better for those seeking the large number of temporary, seasonal jobs. These positions, which are typically filled by high school or college students, do not generally have formal education requirements and are open to anyone with the desired personal qualities. Employers compete for a share of the vacationing student labor force, and although salaries in recreation are often lower than those in other fields, the nature of the work and the opportunity to work outdoors is attractive to many. Seasonal employment prospects as program directors should be good for applicants with specialized training and certification in an activity like swimming.

Employment of recreation workers is expected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through 2008, as growing numbers of people spend more time and money on leisure services. Growth in these jobs will also stem from increased interest in fitness and health and the rising demand for recreational opportunities for older adults in senior centers and retirement communities. In particular, jobs will increase in social services as more recreation workers are needed to develop and lead activity programs in senior centers, halfway houses, children’s homes, and daycare programs for people with special needs.

Recreation worker jobs will also continue to increase as more businesses recognize the benefits of recreation programs and other services like wellness programs and elder care. Job growth will also occur in the commercial recreation industry—in amusement parks, athletic clubs, camps, sports clinics, and swimming pools.

Employment of recreation workers in local government—where nearly half of these workers are employed—is expected to grow more slowly than in other industries due to budget constraints. As a result, some local park and recreation departments are expected to do less hiring for permanent, full-time positions than in the past. Because resources and priorities for public services differ from one community to another, this sector’s share of recreation worker employment will vary widely by region.

Earnings

Median hourly earnings of recreation workers who worked full time in 1998 were \$7.93. The middle 50 percent earned between about \$6.14 and \$10.65, while the top 10 percent earned \$14.74 or more. However, earnings of recreation directors and others in supervisory or managerial positions can be substantially higher. Hourly earnings in the industries employing the largest number of recreation workers in 1997 were:

Nursing and personal care facilities	\$8.10
Local government, except education and hospitals	8.00
Individual and family services	7.30
Civic and social associations	6.80
Miscellaneous amusement and recreation services	6.20

Most public and private recreation agencies provide full-time recreation workers with typical benefits; part-time workers receive few, if any, benefits.

Related Occupations

Recreation workers must exhibit leadership and sensitivity in dealing with people. Other occupations that require similar personal qualities include recreational therapists, social workers, parole officers, human relations counselors, school counselors, clinical and counseling psychologists, and teachers.

Sources of Additional Information

For information on jobs in recreation, contact employers such as local government departments of parks and recreation, nursing and personal care facilities, and YMCAs.

Ordering information for materials describing careers and academic programs in recreation is available from:

☛ National Recreation and Park Association, Division of Professional Services, 22377 Belmont Ridge Road, Ashburn, VA 20148-4501. Internet: <http://www.nrpa.org>

For information on careers in employee services and corporate recreation, contact:

☛ National Employee Services and Recreation Association, 2211 York Rd., Suite 207, Oakbrook, IL 60521. Internet: <http://www.nesra.org>

Social Workers

(O*NET 27305A, 27305B, 27305C, and 27302)

Significant Points

- A bachelor's degree is the minimum requirement for many entry-level jobs, but a master's degree in social work (MSW)—required for clinical practice—or a related field is becoming the norm for many positions.
- Employment is projected to grow much faster than average.
- Competition for jobs is expected to be keen in cities but opportunities should be good in rural areas.

Nature of the Work

Social work is a profession for those with a strong desire to help people, to make things better, and to make a difference. Social workers help people function the best way they can in their environment, deal with their relationships with others, and solve personal and family problems.

Social workers often see clients who face a life-threatening disease or a social problem. These problems may include inadequate housing, unemployment, lack of job skills, financial distress, serious illness or disability, substance abuse, unwanted pregnancy, or antisocial behavior. Social workers also assist families that have serious domestic conflicts, including those involving child or spousal abuse.

Through direct counseling, social workers help clients identify their concerns, consider effective solutions, and find reliable resources. Social workers typically consult and counsel clients and arrange for services that can help them. Often, they refer clients to specialists in services such as debt counseling, childcare or elder care, public assistance, or alcohol or drug rehabilitation. Social workers then follow through with the client to assure that services are helpful and that clients make proper use of the services offered. Social workers may review eligibility requirements, help fill out forms and applications, visit clients on a regular basis, and provide support during crises.

Social workers practice in a variety of settings. In hospitals and psychiatric hospitals, they provide or arrange for a range of support services. In mental health and community centers, social

workers provide counseling services on marriage, family, and adoption matters, and they help people through personal or community emergencies, such as dealing with loss or grief or arranging for disaster assistance. In schools, they help children, parents, and teachers cope with problems. In social service agencies, they help people locate basic benefits, such as income assistance, housing, and job training. Social workers also offer counseling to those receiving therapy for addictive or physical disorders in rehabilitation facilities, and to people in nursing homes in need of routine living care. In employment settings, they counsel people with personal, family, professional, or financial problems affecting their work performance. Social workers who work in courts and correction facilities evaluate and counsel individuals in the criminal justice system to cope better in society. In private practice, they provide clinical or diagnostic testing services covering a wide range of personal disorders.

Social workers often provide social services in health-related settings that now are governed by managed care organizations. To contain costs, these organizations are emphasizing short-term intervention, ambulatory and community-based care, and greater decentralization of services.

Most social workers specialize in an area of practice. Although some conduct research or are involved in planning or policy development, most social workers prefer an area of practice in which they interact with clients.

Clinical social workers offer psychotherapy or counseling and a range of diagnostic services in public agencies, clinics, and private practice.

Child welfare or family services social workers may counsel children and youths who have difficulty adjusting socially, advise parents on how to care for disabled children, or arrange for home-maker services during a parent's illness. If children have serious problems in school, child welfare workers may consult with parents, teachers, and counselors to identify underlying causes and develop plans for treatment. Some social workers assist single parents, arrange adoptions, and help find foster homes for neglected, abandoned, or abused children. Child welfare workers also work in residential institutions for children and adolescents.

Child or adult protective services social workers investigate reports of abuse and neglect and intervene if necessary. They may initiate legal action to remove children from homes and place them temporarily in an emergency shelter or with a foster family.

Mental health social workers provide services for persons with mental or emotional problems. Such services include individual and group therapy, outreach, crisis intervention, social rehabilitation, and training in skills of everyday living. They may also help plan for supportive services to ease patients' return to the community. (Counselors and psychologists, who may provide similar services, are discussed elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

Health care social workers help patients and their families cope with chronic, acute, or terminal illnesses and handle problems that may stand in the way of recovery or rehabilitation. They may organize support groups for families of patients suffering from cancer, AIDS, Alzheimer's disease, or other illnesses. They also advise family caregivers, counsel patients, and help plan for their needs after discharge by arranging for at-home services—from meals-on-wheels to oxygen equipment. Some work on interdisciplinary teams that evaluate certain kinds of patients—geriatric or organ transplant patients, for example.

School social workers diagnose students' problems and arrange needed services, counsel children in trouble, and help integrate disabled students into the general school population. School social workers deal with problems such as student pregnancy, misbehavior in class, and excessive absences. They also advise teachers on how to cope with problem students.

Criminal justice social workers make recommendations to courts, prepare pre-sentencing assessments, and provide services to prison inmates and their families. Probation and parole officers